

The Left Wing Revolts Against the Socialists

Anything Short of Revolution Is Cast Aside by This New Group

By Herbert J. Seligmann

THE Socialist party is threatened with revolution in its own ranks. Wearied with the "moderate" policy of its leaders, a faction calling itself the "Left Wing" is attempting to capture the party machinery. Its sponsors lean to direct action, the political strike, as one of the means of bringing about the Socialist commonwealth. They denounce all compromise, all attempts at reform, in their platforms and manifestoes. Anything short of complete revolution is betrayal of socialism, in their belief. To attain their ends they endorse the activities of the I. W. W., so far as they go; but in the words of the Left Wing leaders, "even the I. W. W. is becoming conservative."

Whether the Socialist party is to be swung to this extreme position, whether the present insurrection in the party is to remain a revolt or become a revolution, will for some time, perhaps only a short time, hang in the balance. Meanwhile, the Left Wing have already captured the Socialist organization of the State of Michigan, have on a test registered a strong minority of the votes in the central committee of the Socialist party of New York County and are in control in Boston. They have an organization in Philadelphia. They are represented by two aggressive publications, "The Revolutionary Age," a weekly published in Boston, and "The Proletarian," published monthly in Detroit.

They are forcing the issue against the national executive committee of the Socialist party by demanding an emergency national convention, at which they expect to make a show of power. Whether or not the Socialist party calls this convention, the Left Wing intends calling a convention of its own. To back the campaign in New York City they intend having their own publication here. This implies that they will attempt to dominate the party machinery and take over the official party organ, "The Call." It may be that "The Revolutionary Age" is to be brought to New York City from Boston, or that a new periodical will be established here.

At the Crossroads

It has apparently been the function of the Left Wing to bring the Socialist party to the parting of the ways. The present fissure is the second to occur as a result of the war and the problems which the war raised. The first widened into the secession of a group which found it impossible to go with the Socialist party in its irreconcilable opposition to this country's entrance into the war. That group, in which Spargo, Stokes, Walling, Russell and Slobodin were leading, or, as the party claimed, isolated figures, put nationalism and patriotism above internationalism. They rebelled especially against the majority report of the committee on war and militarism at St. Louis in 1917, which on its adoption became known as the "St. Louis Resolution."

That report, it will be recalled, said that "our entrance into the European war was instigated by the predatory capitalists in the United States, who boast of the enormous profit of seven billion dollars from the manufacture and sale of munitions and war supplies," and further said that "the war of the United States against Germany cannot be justified even on the plea that it is a war in defence of American rights or American honor." "We brand the declaration of war by our government as a crime against the people of the United States and against the nations of the world," said the report at another point. "In all modern history there has been no war more unjustifiable than the war in which we are about to engage."

The resolution declared for "continuous, active and public opposition to the war," "unyielding opposition to all proposed legislation for military or industrial conscription," and, in addition to resistance to press censorship and restrictions on the freedom of communication, urged "widespread educational propaganda to enlighten the masses as to the true relation between capitalism and war, and to rouse and organize them for action, not only against present war evils, but for the prevention of

future wars and for the destruction of the causes of war."

The Left Wing are carrying opposition to the political state a step further, to the point where they advocate destruction of the political state in order that a proletarian controlled organization may be substituted. Where the "moderate Socialists," as the Left Wing calls those in control of the party machinery, favor repeal of the espionage act, agitation in favor of the release of political prisoners—emphasis on political action, in short—the Left Wing are for concentrating on the destruction of the political state. Although the moderate Socialists subscribe to revolutionary doctrine, the emphasis of the Left Wing is more pronounced and definite on revolutionary action. They are known variously as "extremists," "impossibilists" and "hell-raisers" in more conservative ranks.

In some of its aspects the threatened division of the Socialist party is not unlike that by which the present party came into existence from factions of the Socialist Labor party some eighteen years ago. At that time the leaders of the Socialist Labor party, under Daniel De Leon, found themselves in opposition to the organized labor groups of the time—the American Federation of Labor and the Knights of Labor. They proceeded to establish the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance, which was to be a trade union auxiliary of the Socialist Labor party.

Largely because of its hostility or indifference to existing labor organizations, the Socialist Labor party was found unsatisfactory by a group, among whom were Eugene Debs, Victor Berger, Jesse C. Fox, Seymour Stedman and Frederic Heath. They formed the Social Democratic party of America, which finally succeeded in amalgamating with a wing of the Socialist Labor party, and in 1901 the Socialist party came into being.

The Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance, which was founded by De Leon and his associates, became the predecessor of the present I. W. W. Ill organized as the early body was, it still was based on the conception of industrial unionism, organization of all the men in an industry, as opposed to the craft organization of the American Federation of Labor. It is this form of unionism which the Left Wing group of the Socialist

The Manifesto of the Left Wing

THE manifesto and programme of the Left Wing section of the greater New York locals of the Socialist party, printed in "The Revolutionary Age" of February 8, were amended at a convention of the Left Wing held in New York City February 16. It was a mass convention of the membership, with fraternal delegates from the Boston local and other locals. Quotations from the final version of the manifesto are printed herewith. The convention also adopted two resolutions. One was a resolution endorsing "The Revolutionary Age" and the other denounced the action of the party's national executive committee in issuing a call for a so-called "amnesty convention" in May as a substitute for an emergency national convention and to "baffle the will of the membership."

Failure of "moderate" or parliamentary socialism in Europe during the years preceding the war is the cause assigned in the "Manifesto of the Left Wing" section of the Socialist party of New York City for the rise of this new group. The Socialist parliamentary leaders even went so far as to defend the bourgeoisie against the working class, "as in the first Briand Ministry in France, when the official party press was opened to a defence of the shooting of striking railway workers at the order of the Socialist-bourgeois coalition cabinet."

"This situation was brought about by mixing the democratic cant of the eighteenth century with scientific socialism. The result was what Rosa Luxemburg called 'sausage socialism.' The 'moderates' emphasized petty-bourgeois socialism in order to attract tradesmen, shopkeepers and members of the professions, and, of course, the latter flocked to the Socialist movement in great numbers, seeking relief from the constant grinding between corporate capital and awakening labor."

"Moderate socialism" then fell a prey to "social patriotism and nationalism." Russia provided the first battleground for moderate and revolutionary socialism to come to grips.

"Three main contending parties attempted to ride into power on the revolutionary tide: the Cadets, the 'moderate Socialists' (Mensheviks and Social Revolutionists), and the revolutionary Socialists—the Bolsheviks. The Cadets were first to be swept into power, but they tried to stem the still rising flood with a few abstract political ideals and were soon carried away. The soldiers, workers and peasants could no longer be fooled by phrases. The Mensheviks and Social Revolutionists succeeded the Cadets. And now came the crucial test. Would they, in accord with Marxian teachings, make themselves the ruling class and sweep away the old conditions of production and thus prepare the way for the cooperative commonwealth? Or would they tinker with the old machinery and try to foist it on the masses as something just as good?"

"They did the latter and proved for all time that 'moderate socialism' cannot be trusted."

The position of the Revolutionary Socialists is given as follows:

"Revolutionary Socialists hold, with the founders of scientific socialism, that there are two dominant classes in society—the bourgeoisie and the proletariat; that between these two classes a struggle must go on until the working class, through the seizure of the instruments of production and distribution, the abolition of the capitalist state and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, creates a Socialist system. Revolutionary Socialists do not believe that they can be voted into power. They struggle for the conquest of power by the revolutionary proletariat. Then comes the transition period from capitalism to socialism, of which Marx speaks in his 'Critique of the Gotha Programme' when he says: 'Between the capitalist society and the communist lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. This corresponds to a political

transition period in which the state cannot be anything else but the dictatorship of the proletariat."

The Socialist party leaders in the United States are then accused of shirking the task of radically changing party policies and tactics to meet the unemployment and discontent which have followed the war.

"The temper of the workers and soldiers, after the sacrifices they have made in the war, is such that they will not endure the reactionary labor conditions so openly advocated by the master class. A series of labor struggles is bound to follow—indeed, is beginning now. Shall the Socialist party continue to feed the workers with social reform legislation at this critical period? Shall it approach the whole question from the standpoint of votes and the election of representatives to the legislatures? Shall it emphasize the consumers' point of view, when Socialist principles teach that the worker is robbed at the point of production? Shall it talk about the cost of living and taxation when it should be explaining how the worker is robbed at his job?"

The formation of the new Labor party is hailed as "an immature expression of a new spirit in the labor movement; but a labor party is not the instrument for the emancipation of the working class." "Laborism is as much a danger to the revolutionary proletariat as 'moderate' socialism; neither is an instrument for the conquest of power."

Nationalist capitalist control becomes imperialism finally, and in this country the capitalist class "is using organized labor for its imperialistic purposes." The danger is asserted that the Socialist party of America might use bourgeois reforms to attract the workers' votes. The object of the "master class" is to divert the workers with this bait from their revolutionary aim.

"On the basis of the class struggle, then, the Socialist party of America must reorganize itself, must prepare to come to grips with the master class during the difficult period of capitalist readjustment now going on. This it can do only by teaching the working class the truth about present-day conditions; it must preach revolutionary industrial unionism and urge all workers to organize into industrial unions, the only form of labor organization which can cope with the power of great modern aggregations of capital. It must carry on its political campaigns, not merely as a means of electing officials to political office, as in the past, but as a year round educational campaign to arouse the workers to class conscious economic and political action and to keep alive the burning ideal of revolution in the hearts of the people."

"We assert with Marx that 'the class struggle is essentially a political struggle,' and we can only accept his own oft repeated interpretation of that phrase. The class struggle, whether it manifest itself on the industrial field or in the direct struggle for governmental control, is essentially a struggle for the capture and destruction of the capitalist state. This is a political act. In this broader view of the term 'political' Marx includes revolutionary industrial action."

the proletariat, under the impact of which new forms of industrial organization and struggle, a new ideology, were being developed, met the open hostility or lack of understanding of socialism."

The present leaders of the Socialist party Fraina identifies with "Ebert, David, Scheidemann & Co. in Germany, with petty bourgeois 'majority' socialism everywhere." They have not developed, he says, "a realistic revolutionary policy—a policy that is instinct in the struggles of the proletariat—a policy

no other nation is organized Socialism as loose, as purposeless, as petty bourgeois as in the United States."

Then Fraina proceeds to an indictment involving both the Socialist party and labor. If labor has been reactionary, Socialism has been indifferent to such insurgencies as have shown themselves. Referring to demonstrations like that of the Western Federation of Miners twenty years ago and to the I. W. W. at present, he says:

"All these great instinctive revolts of

party are especially stressing now. The moderate Socialists have not much sympathy with the Gompers regime in the American Federation of Labor and they have endorsed industrial unionism in their national platform, but to the actual practitioners of industrial unionism, the I. W. W., the Left Wing are closer than are the moderates.

"In no other large nation is the labor movement as reactionary as in the United States," writes Louis Fraina, leader of the Boston section of the Left Wing. "In

The World's Greatest Publisher—Trotzky

By Elias Tobenkin

WARSAW, February 24.

TROTZKY has become the world's greatest publisher, says a writer in the Russian paper "Watshavskaya Reich" this morning, and warns the world not to take Trotzky's ability as a publisher lightly, not to ignore it, but to go into competition with him.

"Tens of thousands of poods (a pood is 32 American pounds) of Bolshevik literature in all languages and dialects have recently been printed by the Bolsheviks," says the writer, "and they are now discharging this literature upon the world. This last weapon of Bolshevism, the printed word, which at first was not taken seriously, has proved a most powerful factor. If the Bolsheviks still hold themselves in power in Russia it is due in a large measure to the enormous quantities of glowing propaganda literature that they spread. All those who stand guard over true democracy had better begin at once to meet the enemy with his own weapon. Let them deny the printed lies of the Bolsheviks with printed truth."

"A student of the Moscow Polytechnic who had just arrived in Warsaw, with whom I had an extended talk, corroborated the above statement with regard to the effectiveness with which the Bolsheviks are using the printing press to gain popularity for Bolshevism."

"The Bolsheviks," said this student, "are succeeding in impressing the people with the belief that Bolshevism is the best system of society that the world

has yet seen, and that it is only the attitude of the capitalist world which isolated Russia, and refuses to deal with her, that makes the initial stages of Bolshevism so difficult."

"The Bolsheviks assure their followers that world revolution is coming, and that then Russia's isolation will end."

Ten Square Feet Per Person

"My informant described conditions in Moscow as follows: 'All stores are closed. Kuznetski Most, which was one of the streets, is to-day deserted. Everything is nationalized and the government keeps only a few stores open and articles in these stores can be purchased only by card. All signs have been taken down as there is no need to advertise one's business any more. The government owns everything and does not need to advertise. The people have become remarkably indifferent to everything that goes on about them. They think only of the next meal and a warm room. In the matter of rooms the Bolsheviks have instituted reforms which have won them many friends from among the lowest strata, the lumpen-proletariat. They have issued an order allowing ten square feet of space per person. With this rule in operation they entered the best homes in Moscow and measured the space of the home. In nearly every case the homes of wealthy families were found to have two or three times the space the Bolsheviks allotted. All such homes were redivided, and families from the slums were promptly lodged in the same apartments, a slight partition being hastily constructed between them. Some of the wealthy families gave up their homes altogether and left the city, but those that could not

leave the city simply resigned themselves."

"The Bolshevik government is at present concerned almost exclusively with the question of building up a large army. Everything else is made to wait while the army is being built up. Trotzky is seldom in Moscow, but spends most of his time at the front."

"The Bolshevik army, military men in Russia now admit, is much better disciplined than the army under the Czar had ever been. And this is hardly to be wondered at. The Russian army is today the most privileged class in the country; it is much more privileged than the army had ever been under the Czar."

"The army has everything of the best and in sufficient quantities. Because of the need of supplying everything to the army the civil life of Moscow has sunk to a low level. Streetcars run only to seven o'clock in the evening and then there are so few of them that most men prefer to walk rather than wait for a car."

"As for the food situation—it is bad. For 5 rubles one gets a meal at a public kitchen consisting of a plate of soup and a piece of horsemeat. Horsemeat sells for 15 rubles a pound and the last I bought of it I had to pay 27 rubles for it. Bread bought from these speculators is 15 rubles a pound. One must buy bread from the speculators, as all those who are not considered workers get only a quarter of a pound of bread a day."

"Do people protest? Are there any who plan to overthrow the Bolsheviks?" I asked.

"It is very hard to protest," was the reply, "when there is no press to register the protest." Up to within a few days of my departure from Moscow there appeared only Bolshevik newspapers. Just before I left I saw a copy of a Menshevik

paper called 'Vperiod' (Forward) which was just beginning to appear. As a matter of fact people are afraid to protest. It is far more dangerous to protest against the government than it was under the Czar, for, as you may already know, the Bolsheviks have abolished all courts and dispensed with all lawyers."

"Men in Russia are now judged not in accordance with law, for they deride the old law, but in accordance with conscience—'po sovietu,' it is called in Russian. The Soviet government appoints a judge. Most often the judge is a working man. He is, of course, a faithful Bolshevik or he would not get the appointment. Any one can accuse the defendant or speak in his favor and then judge and jury decide the case according to the impression the accused and his defenders have made upon them. As there are no appeals and no legal technicalities to invoke, it goes without saying that a rebel against the Bolshevik government has every chance to be shot five minutes after the verdict is pronounced against him. Men therefore do not protest."

Consumption, But No Production

"The only thing that may ultimately break down the Bolshevik government is the complete stagnation of the country. They are using up the old trains and steamships without supplying new ones. There is no production, no manufacture worth speaking of. Unless the Bolsheviks change their attitude in this direction and begin to produce as well as consume they may die a slow death."

"My informant said that details with regard to the fate of the royal family, which for a long time were withheld, were made public recently. The Czar,

"Even the I. W. W. Is Becoming Conservative," Say the Radicals

able to arouse, integrate and direct the revolutionary energy of the proletariat."

In so far, therefore, as the I. W. W. represents revolutionary elements, teaches that the present organization of society must be entirely destroyed to make way for control by the workers, the Left Wing indorse the I. W. W. In the approaching era of industrial disturbance, according to Fraina, the Socialist party should embark on a campaign "to move the masses." The campaign should "get the workers to march out of the plants, go to other plants and pull out other workers, broaden the scope of this industrial action into mass action. . . . Only the aggressive action of the industrial proletariat can prevent the government from 'putting over' its reactionary plans."

These strikes are to be used to "develop in the proletariat the consciousness of revolutionary mass action, to develop the concept and practice of political strikes, to make it realize . . . that when it wants to act its action should develop out of the mill, mine and factory. Our political action should become part and parcel of this mass action, should promote the aggressive industrial struggle. To broaden a strike into a demonstration, to develop out of these revolutionary mass action against capitalism and the state—that is the policy of revolutionary socialism, that is the policy which will transform the coming period of strikes definitely into the period of revolutionary action, preparing the mass action of the revolution."

The leaders of the Socialist party, by reason of their alienation from the American Federation of Labor as well as from the I. W. W., have not been in a position to initiate any such programme as Fraina and the Left Wing stand for. The membership of union men in the Socialist party heretofore has been a limited one, except in groups like the United Hebrew Trades and the Western Federation of Miners. The leaders of the Socialist party have been, as one of their own "moderate" critics put it, "long on theory and resolutionizing and painfully short on action and revolutionizing."

Unlike the I. W. W., the Left Wing do not stop short at industrial unionism. They are for industrial organization akin to the Soviet government of Russia. The manifesto of the New York section of the Left Wing, which is in its essentials indorsed by the Left Wing elsewhere, urges the organization of workmen's councils, "workmen's control of industry, to be exercised by the industrial organizations (industrial unions or soviets) of the workers and the industrial vote, as against government ownership or state control of industry," repudiation of national debts and expropriation of large organizations of capital.

The hostility of this section of the Socialist party toward the present leadership was heightened, no doubt, by the action taken in 1912, when the Socialist party constitution was amended and a provision inserted expelling from the

party all who professed belief in sabotage. Although the amendment was dropped in 1914, on the ground that the party did not wish to condition or interfere with the programmes of labor organizations, it made an irreconcilable breach with the I. W. W., against which it was directed, and with large sections of floating revolutionary sentiment.

Feeding on New Hopes

All this revolutionary sentiment the Left Wing hopes to gather in. The Left Wing says of its proposals: "These are not the 'immediate demands' comprised in the social reform planks now in the platform of our party; they are not a compromise with the capitalist state, but imply a revolutionary struggle against that state and against capitalism, the conquest of power by the proletariat through revolutionary mass action. They imply the new Soviet state of the organized producers, the dictatorship of the proletariat; they are preliminary revolutionary measures for the expropriation of capital and the introduction of communist socialism."

The cleavage between the Left Wing and the "moderates" is deepened by the moderates themselves. But the Left Wing has left no doubt about its existence. In Michigan last February the Socialist party in a convention completely dominated by the insurgent group passed resolutions stating that the national executive committee of the Socialist party had demonstrated "its incapacity to formulate a sound Socialist position." The resolutions repudiated the national executive's action in sending delegates to the "yellow international recently held at Berne, Switzerland." An amendment to the constitution of the Michigan State Socialist party read as follows:

"Any member, local or branch of a local advocating legislative reforms or supporting organizations formed for the purpose of advocating such reforms shall be expelled from the Socialist party. The state executive committee is authorized to revoke the charter of any local that does not conform to this amendment."

An Emergency Convention

As against these aggressive measures of the Left Wing, the moderate group reply that as no Socialists have ever been taken into the Cabinet or accepted government office there is no conservative wing of the party, and the entire party, or 95 per cent of it, is to be regarded as Left Wing. The leaders of the Left Wing retort that if the party is Left Wing it is not properly represented in its officers. To this end they are calling for an emergency national convention of the party.

It should be said of the Left Wing that the Lettish branches furnish its main strength in Boston, and the Russians are its strength in Michigan.

In New York City the Socialist local, at 43 West Twenty-ninth Street, which takes in the Third, Fifth and Tenth Assembly districts, is the centre of the Left Wing activity. It is of this local that John Reed, Rose Pastor Stokes and Jim Larkin are members, and among the English speaking locals of the party it is undoubtedly the foremost in Left Wing agitation. Another Left Wing local is that in the Eighth Assembly district, in lower Second Avenue.

Officially the New York County central committee of the Socialist party has condemned the Left Wing for its factionalism and characterized it as "an organization whose sole activity is having no other effect than to divide and dissipate our strength and forces." The resolution, which was submitted to all branches in Manhattan, stated it to be the sentiment of the executive that "there is no room within our party for another organization parallel to the organization of the party proper; that we strongly disapprove of it; that the diversion to a faction of the work and of the funds and energies that belong to the party as a whole is a menace to the integrity of our party."

But however deeply the creation of a new and parallel organization is deplored by Socialist party members, many of the rank and file sympathize with its extreme stand. "A Left Wing is desirable, but a Left Wing section is suicidal," is the way Evans Clark put it in a letter to "The Call." And a letter signed by Scott Nearing, Mr. Clark, Moses Oppenheimer, Louis P. Lochner, Ludwig Lore, Walter M. Cook, Benjamin Glassberg and several others stated that "the time has come for the party to restate its principles and reformulate its tactics."

Eight principles are proposed in the letter, closely following the programme laid down by the Left Wing. They include abolition of all social reform planks, agitation exclusively for the overthrow of capitalism, propaganda for revolutionary unionism, call for a special national convention of the party, and refusal to participate in conference with "moderate Socialists" and "social patriots."

The Different Young Man

By Harry Godfrey

THE manager of the feature film concerned gestured generously toward a spacious chair. The Diffident Young Man permitted himself to sink into its leather depths. "Information?" the manager repeated affably. "Yes, sire. We just exclude information. Tell you all about any of our stars. Is it?"

"No, none of them," the Diffident Young Man protested. "It's Ibsen's 'Ghosts.' We heard a new film version is being produced."

The managerial hands waved deprecatingly. "Ibsen's 'Ghosts'? Sorry, but I don't know anything about it. Our company doesn't use those—er—sensational titles any more. Now, perhaps the Thrills Feature Corporation, across the hall!"

The Thrills manager was briskly facetious. "Ibsen's 'Ghosts'?" he murmured. "You don't seriously suppose we'd try to put over more than one ghost of one man, do you? I don't know what sort of a screen character this Ibsen is. 'Ibsen's Ghosts!' Who wrote it, any way?"

In the next office the Diffident Young Man was shrewdly appraised as a theatre manager.

"Ibsen's 'Ghosts'?" No; that scenario was written for us, but we rejected it. Didn't come up to our standard. Fact is, the public's getting tired of spook plays. But if you're keen on 'em and want a corking release, let me show you 'The Phantom Engineer.' That'll pull 'em right out of their seats. Talk about melodramatic! Man, we paid \$200 for that scenario!"